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EXPANDING OPTIONS:
A PROFILE OF OLDER GRADUATES OF WOMEN'S COLLEGES

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PREFACE

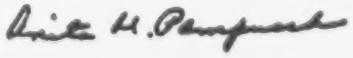
For the past 15 years, the Women's College Coalition has been engaged in evaluating and documenting the effectiveness of women's colleges, through a series of research projects which have looked at learning environment, productivity, leadership, alumnae support, and other aspects of these institutions. Significant studies include: "A Study of the Learning Environment at Women's Colleges," (1981); "A Profile of Women's College Presidents," (1982); "'67/'77: A Profile of Recent Women's College Graduates," (1985); "Enrollment Trends in Women's Colleges," (1981); and "Alumnae Giving at Women's Colleges: A Ten-Year Report," (1988).

This most recent Coalition study, "Expanding Options: A Profile of Older Graduates of Women's Colleges," adds to the available literature by documenting the effects, both personal and professional, of earning a college degree later in life. It focuses on nearly 3,400 women who earned these degrees from women's colleges, and thus adds an important dimension to our understanding of the working and contribution of these institutions. But the study may well also provide a significant indicator of the beneficial impact of college for older women students who elect to start or complete a college degree in settings other than a women's college.

During the last two decades, American colleges and universities have responded to an influx of older, non-traditional students by rapidly creating and expanding programs for this group. The nation's women's colleges have been no exception, and they have experienced substantial success in this area because of their ability to understand and respond to the particular needs presented by the older female learner, who is most often juggling family, career, and college.

The "Expanding Options" study reported in this publication has yielded some highly significant findings: that the women in the study who entered or returned to college later in life overwhelmingly feel that their investment has been a sound one; that they see their "gains" as related to such important quality-of-life indicators as job satisfaction, economic-well being, self-esteem, and personal enrichment; and that they feel extremely well served by the institutions they attended.

This project is, however, only a start in an area largely untouched by research on the outcomes of a college education. The Women's College Coalition is pleased to present this "Expanding Options" study, and hopes that it may spark further research, in other educational settings, on the ways in which higher education can best serve the older students who make up an increasingly large part of our future.



Dr. Anita Pampusch
President, The College of St. Catherine
Chair, Women's College Coalition

INTRODUCTION

Since its founding in 1972, the Women's College Coalition has focused considerable energy on documenting the productivity of America's women's colleges. To date, most of the Coalition's research, like that of most other educational researchers, has focused on traditional-age students.

The demographic realities of today and tomorrow, however, bring the older, "non-traditional" student into a heightened arena of interest. As the overall population of the United States has grown older, non-traditional students, and in particular older female students, have become the fastest growing segment on many campuses today. Yet "returning" women students -- much touted with respect to their influx into higher education -- have been largely forgotten in the literature of "outcomes," or the exploration of how a college education changes and benefits its students.

This Women's College Coalition study of older women graduates represents an important start in correcting that deficiency. It explores the impact of the baccalaureate degree earned later in life, based on the experience of nearly 3,400 women from 33 women's colleges across the country, who entered college at a median age of 34.

The "Expanding Options" study describes non-traditional women students in three different life phases: 1) at the time of re-entering college; 2) while in college; and 3) following graduation. It looks at family status, employment status, community involvement, and self-image, both before and after completion of the degree. In addition, it documents the students' undergraduate fields of concentration, patterns of extra-curricular activity, graduate study, attitudes towards college, and attitudes on a number of issues related to the position of women in society.

A clear profile of the "typical" older women graduate emerges from this study. She is most likely a first-generation college graduate, who is married, has two children, works full-time, and has a salary in the $20-$30,000 range. She returned to college in her mid-30's, and had previously earned twenty college credits (or less than one year's equivalent). She completed her degree in four years or less and -- since graduating -- has enrolled in a further educational program. This typical older women college graduate would choose the same college again. She strongly believes that her college education contributed significantly to the development of her own self-image, to her desire for life-long learning, and to her appreciation for different perspectives on issues.

Overall, the findings give reason to be highly optimistic about the impact of the women's college experience on these non-traditional graduates. Respondents in the study report higher salaries and greater job satisfaction and responsibility following their degree. They indicate that the women's college experience contributed greatly to their personal growth, and express overwhelming satisfaction with the institutions they attended.

In structure and format, this "Expanded Options" study parallels an earlier research study conducted by the Women's College Coalition in 1984, titled '67/'77: A Profile of Recent Women's College Graduates.

"'67/'77" compared and reported the undergraduate and subsequent life experience of 5,000 traditional-aged women in these two graduating classes.

Students in the current "Expanding Options" study have graduated more recently (1984 is the median year) but, because they started later, are close to the age of '67 graduates from the first project. Taken together, these two studies provide an important body of information on the college experiences, aspirations, and achievements of a diverse group of women students -- traditional and non-traditional -- who have completed college over the last twenty years. They also provide an important perspective on the role and contribution of the nation's women's colleges, which have offered -- throughout these last 20 years of rapid social and institutional change pertaining to women -- the learning environment in which the growth and development for students described in the studies so clearly takes place.

The Coalition is proud to have conducted this landmark study. We are grateful for the support and involvement of our partner in this activity, the College of Notre Dame of Maryland, and in particular for the dedication and insight of the research team -- Dr. Sally Wall and Sr. Kara Ryan, both members of the faculty of the College of Notre Dame of Maryland.

Mary K. Huchette
Associate Director

Marcia K. Sharp
Executive Director

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE STUDY

- The majority of the respondents (56.7%) returned to school for personal fulfillment; another third (32.7%) returned for work-related reasons.
- Nearly two-thirds (62.3%) returned to school while children were present at home.
- A large majority (81.3%) had some college before enrolling.
- Special academic programming for non-traditional students was the most common reason given for selecting a college.
- Professional fields and liberal arts were about equally represented as academic majors.
- Median time to complete the degree was three years; over three-fourths (78%) had finished by four years.
- More than two-thirds (68.8%) attended continuously, with no stop-out.
- The majority (55.8%) have continued their formal education, and over one-third (34.8%) have enrolled in advanced degree programs.
- More than four-fifths (82.7%) are currently in the work force.
- The vast majority (88.4%) report their job has changed in a positive way since graduating.
- A clear majority (59.3%) support their alma maters with financial contributions.
- Nearly all (91.5%) believe women's colleges foster self confidence.
- Four-fifths (80.1%) currently identify themselves as feminists.
- A vast majority (85%) believe that their college experience contributed to the development of:
  - an appreciation of their own talents and abilities;
  - a desire for life-long learning; and
  - an appreciation of different perspectives on issues.
- An overwhelming majority (91.2%) would choose the same school again.

STUDY FINDINGS

RESEARCH DESIGN

- The Study of Older Women Graduates surveys women who began or resumed studies in a Continuing Education program at a women's college and graduated between 1970 and 1988.

- Colleges with fewer than 500 non-traditional female graduates were asked to survey all such alumnae, those with 501-2,000 such graduates to survey every other one, and those with more than 2,000 to survey every third such graduate.

- Of the more than 9,269 questionnaires mailed, 3,393 were returned -- a response rate of 36.6%.

- The participating schools represent the diversity of American women's colleges in terms of geographic location, size of enrollment, sources of funding (public versus private), and affiliation status (religious versus non-sectarian).

PROFILE OF STUDENTS UPON ENROLLMENT

Age, Race

- 88.5% of the respondents are white and 11.6% are minority, with 56% of these being black.

- Median percentage of minority respondents per school is 8%, with four schools having 20% or more.

- Almost half the respondents (42.9%) were in their 30's when they enrolled. Median age was 34. Median age of minority women was 36.

- Median age of respondents at graduation was 37. Fifty percent were between 31 and 44; the oldest was 85. Median age of minority women was 39.

Parents' Education

- Most of the respondents are first-generation college graduates. Fewer than one-quarter had a parent with a college degree (14.6% of mothers and 23.2% of fathers).

- 10% had both parents with college degrees or better.

Marital Status & Children

- o At the time of enrollment:
  - * most of the women (59.2%) were married and living with their spouses;
  - * 3.7% were cohabitating;
  - * 15.9% were separated or divorced;
  - * 2.8% were widowed;
  - * 18.4% had never married; and
  - * of the minority women, 47.1% were married and living with spouses, and 23% were separated or divorced.
- o Of all those who were or had been married, the majority (55%) had married between ages 18 and 21, the traditional college years.
- o Nearly three-quarters of the respondents (72.3%) have children:
  - * 13.7% have one child;
  - * 28.4% have two;
  - * 17.1% have three;
  - * 7.9% have four; and
  - * 5.2% have five or more.
- o One-quarter (27.6%) have no children.
- o Three-fourths of the women (75.9%) do not expect to have (more) children.
- o At the time of their mothers' enrollment, most of the children were school-age. The average ages were between 10 and 12.

Employment

- o When starting/returning to school:
  - * fewer than half the respondents (46%) were employed full-time;

- * one-fifth (21.7%) were employed part-time;
- * one-fifth (20.5%) were full-time homemakers;
- * one-tenth (9.6%) were unemployed and not seeking employment; and
- * 2.2% were unemployed and seeking employment.

- o For minority respondents considered separately:
  - * more than half (59.7%) were employed full-time;
  - * 17.8% were employed part-time; and
  - * one-tenth (9.7%) were full-time homemakers.

- o Nearly three-quarters of the respondents (71.4%) were making under $20,000 a year. (Part-time salaries were converted to full-time scale.)

Dates of Enrollment/Graduation

- o Median year of enrollment for the group was 1980, with 50% enrolling between 1976 and 1982.
- o Median year of graduation for the group was 1984, with 50% graduating between 1980 and 1986.

Prior Education

- o Four-fifths of the women (81.3%) had some college before enrolling.
- o 4.9% already had an undergraduate degree.
- o Almost all college credits the returning students had previously earned were transferrable:
  - * median number earned -- 20 credits;
  - * median number applied to the degree -- 24 credits; and
  - * minority women: median earned and applied -- 3 credits.

PURSUIT OF DEGREE

Reasons For Education

- More than half the respondents (56.7%) identify personal fulfillment as their primary reason for beginning/resuming their studies.

- Another third (32.7%) give reasons related to work as primary motivators.

- Multiple reasons are given for selecting the particular college attended, but the most commonly identified is the college's special academic programming for non-traditional-age students.

- Two additional reasons reported by over half the women are:

  * the college's academic reputation; and

  * the college's academic program.

- For schools with weekend programs, over half the respondents list the availability of a weekend/evening program among their top four reasons for choosing their college. (See Table 1.) In fact, 41.9% identify the availability of such programs as their first or second reason.

- Proximity to home or work was important for half (50.2%) the students at schools with no weekend programs.

Table 1: Reasons for Selecting Chosen College

Graduates of colleges with NO Weekend Program (24 schools -- 2,004 respondents)		*Graduates of colleges WITH Weekend Program (9 schools -- 1,389 respondents)*
53.3%	Special academic programming for non-traditional-age students	59.5%
51.4%	Academic program	50.5%
51.3%	Academic reputation	52.2%
50.2%	Located close to home or work	38.6%
29.4%	Transfer of credit policy	29.6%
22.9%	Convenient scheduling of day courses	12.9%
22.4%	Women's College	23.5%
18.3%	Availability of financial aid	13.2%
14.7%	Weekend or evening program	51.2%
14.2%	Quality of advising	10.8%
9.7%	Cost	4.1%
1.5%	Availability of child care	1.4%
.7%	Availability of housing	2.1%
13.9%	Other	10.1%

Academic Major, Extra-Curricular Activities

- Professional fields and liberal arts were about equally represented in respondents' choices of academic majors:
  - 45.3% chose professional majors; and

* 51.7% chose liberal arts majors, broken down as follows:
  - 27.5% chose arts & humanities majors
  - 20.7% chose social science majors
  - 3.5% chose physical science majors

o Participation in extra-curricular activities while in school was low:

* 58.4% participated in no activities;

* 16.2% belonged to one organization;

* 8.8% belonged to two organizations; and

* 16.6% either belonged to three organizations, or belonged to two but served as an officer in one or both.

o Though no individual activity/organization enlisted many of these older students as participants, the highest ranking choices were:

* honor society with 13.5%;

* peer advising with 8.2%; and

* service organizations with 7.9%.

Financial Support

o The respondents used multiple sources of funding to finance their education -- including their own resources, contributions of spouses and employers, loans, and scholarships.

* Weekend-program respondents list personal income and employer tuition reimbursement more frequently than do non-weekend-program respondents.

* Non-weekend-program respondents list spouse's income and family members' contributions more frequently than do weekend-program respondents.

* Both groups relied heavily on student loans and personal savings.

- Graduates were also asked to identify their major source of support for their studies.
  - The highest ranking source among weekend-program respondents was personal income (for 22.2%). (See Appendix -- Figure 1.)
  - Among non-weekend-program respondents it was spouse's income (for 23%). (See Appendix-- Figure 2.)
  - This difference in major source of income reflects a difference in employment status at the time of schooling.
    - 58.4% of the weekend-program respondents were employed full-time.
    - 37% of the non-weekend-program respondents were employed full-time.
    - Median salary for weekend-program respondents was between $15,000 and $20,000.
    - Median salary for non-weekend-program respondents was between $10,000 and $15,000.
- For minority women considered separately, the major source of financial support was student loans (for 18.8%), personal income (for 17.8%), college scholarships and grants (for 14.2%), and employer reimbursement (for 12.6%).

Child Care

- When starting/returning to school, a majority of the women (62.3%) had children at home.
  - Median age of the oldest child was 12.4.
  - Median age of the second child was 11.1.
  - Median age of the third child was 10.8.
- Only 6.3% had preschoolers.
- Some child care was provided by spouses (24.8%) and other family members (16%), as well as by sitters who came to the home (10.8%).
- Day care, including after-school-care centers, was also utilized (11.5%).
- 22.3% of the women had elementary-school-age children, and many of these stated that they scheduled classes to coincide with the children's school hours.

Time To Complete Degree

- The median time taken to complete the degree was three years.
- 78% had finished by the end of four years.
- 75% studied one or more summers.
- More than two-thirds of the women (68.8%) attended continuously, without stopping-out.
- Fewer than one-third of all women (31.2%) stopped-out for any period of time, though the percentage is higher (41.7%) for minority women considered separately.
  - Of all those stopping-out, one-fourth (25.6%) did so for only one semester.
  - The median number of semesters of stop-out was four.
- For those who stopped-out, the primary reasons were:
  - finances for 19.7%; (for minority women, 27.5%);
  - child care responsibilities for 19.3%;
  - family responsibilities for 13.6%; and
  - work responsibilities for 10.9%.

PROFILE OF GRADUATES

Additional Education

Education did not end with graduation for most of the women.

- Since graduating, over half of the women (55.8%) have continued their formal education.
  - 34.8% have enrolled in an advanced degree program.
  - 20.9% have received an advanced degree.
  - 9.4% have taken courses for credit.
  - 11.6% have taken courses for professional certification.

- o 13.5% plan to pursue additional formal education.
- o 8.2% have taken non-credit courses.
- o Three-quarters of the advanced degree programs enrolled in by the graduates (77.2%) are masters programs; others include law schools, Ph.D. or Ed.D. programs, divinity schools, and medical schools. (See Table 2.)
- o Three in ten of all respondents (29.5%) report that graduating from college changed their educational aspirations for their children. The figure is significantly higher -- 43% -- for minority women.

Table 2: Advanced Degree Programs Enrolled In/Degrees Received

Type of Degree Program	*Percent Enrolled in Degree Programs*	*Percent Received Degree*
All	38.1% (1,293)	20.9% (710)
Masters	77.2%	72.0%
LLB or JD	4.4%	5.3%
Ph.D. or Ed.D.	5.7%	3.0%
B.D. or M.Div.	2.3%	2.4%
MD/DDS/DVM/DO	2.3%	2.1%
Other	8.1%	15.2%

Current Employment Status

- o Nearly two-thirds of the graduates (65.7%) are currently employed full-time -- a 19.7% increase over the number employed full-time at the time of enrollment.
- o 17% are employed part-time.
- o 6.7% are full-time homemakers -- a 13.8% decrease in the number who were full-time homemakers at the time of enrollment.

- One-tenth are unemployed, with 2.8% seeking employment and 7.7% not seeking employment.

- The pattern of increased full-time employment and decreased full-time homemaking is similar for minority women considered separately.

- Of those who were out of the work force for more than a year since graduation or are not currently employed:

  * 16.7% were/are pursuing additional education;

  * 19.4% were/are maintaining a home or caring for small children; and

  * 7.7% were/are serving as volunteers.

Occupations

- The most common occupation among the respondents is manager (21.5%).

- Nurse or related health profession (13.6%), and teacher (13.1%) vie for second place.

- Many fields not traditionally-female are represented, e.g., accountant, finance manager, researcher, consultant, and computer specialist.

Current Salaries

- Seven out of ten graduates are earning more than $20,000 annually.

- The majority (54%) are earning between $20,000 and $39,999; 30.3% are making under $20,000.

- Salaries differ according to major field of study.

  * Median salary for those with physical sciences, social sciences, and professional degrees is between $25,000 and $29,999.

  * Median salary for those with arts and humanities degrees is between $20,000 and $24,999.

  * 42.5% of those with professional degrees make $30,000 or above.

Changes In Job

- o A large majority of the respondents (88.4%) report that their job has changed in a positive way since completing their degree. An even greater percentage of the women who worked full-time upon enrollment and continue to work full-time report positive job changes. (See Table 3.)

Table 3: Ways In Which Job Has Changed Since Completing Degree

	Total Sample	*FT/FT Workers*
Greater opportunity for professional development	49.2%	63.2%
Greater responsibility	48.5%	62.1%
More satisfying	41.3%	51.5%
More opportunity for personal development	37.7%	44.4%
New career field	37.5%	36.8%
Promotion	22.3%	35.6%

Employment Preference

- o Regardless of their own employment status, the graduates view part-time work for pay as the most desirable status, provided they would have enough money to live as comfortably as they would like.
  - * Nearly half (45.1%) would choose this part-time option.
  - * Only about one-quarter (23%) would choose to work full-time.
  - * Fewer than one-fifth (17.3%) would prefer volunteer work.
  - * Only 5% would elect to be homemakers.

- o **Although part-time employment is viewed as most desirable by all groups, more full-time employees prefer full-time employment than do respondents in any other group.**

- o **Likewise, more full-time homemakers prefer homemaking than do respondents in any other group. However, they list homemaking third -- after part-time work and volunteer work.**

Current Marital Status

- o About the same number of the women are currently married and living with a spouse (60.9%) as were at the time of enrollment (59.2%). The comparison is similar for minority women considered separately (45.1% now and 47.1% then).

- o The greatest difference in marital status is for women never married. This figure dropped by one-third -- from 18.4% at the time of enrollment to 12.2% now.

- o About the same number are cohabitating now (3.2%) as were before (3.7%).

- o The number of widows has increased slightly (from 2.8% to 3.5%).

- o One-fifth of the women (20.2%) are currently separated or divorced; this represents a 27% increase over the 15.9% in this status at the time of enrollment. (See Table 4.)

Table 4: Marital Status: At Enrollment & Currently

At Enrollment		*Now*
59.2%	Married, living with spouse	60.9%
3.7%	Cohabitating	3.2%
15.9%	Separated or divorced	20.2%
2.8%	Widowed	3.5%
18.4%	Never Married	12.2%

Involvement With Organizations

- o As a group, the respondents are more involved in organizations than they were before completing their college degrees.
  - * Participation in professional/academic organizations nearly doubled (from 26.6% to 48.3%).
  - * Involvement in women's networks rose from 6.1% to 14.9%. (See Table 5.)

Table 5: Involvement With Organizations

Before Degree		*After Degree*
26.6%	Professional/academic organizations	48.3%
6.1%	Professional women's network	14.9%
24.4%	Educational or service organizations	32.4%
40.9%	Church affiliated/religious groups	41.1%
13.9%	Political organizations	15.2%
9.2%	Women's rights organizations	11.7%
15.7%	Civic/social organizations (not women's)	20.3%
4.3%	Labor unions	6.9%
7.0%	Organized sports	6.8%
3.3%	Other	5.5%

Alumnae Participation

- o One-fifth of the graduates (19.9%) are involved in their college alumnae clubs, with 4.4% assuming leadership roles.
- o The majority (59.3%) support their alma maters with financial contributions.

- o 17.5% attend activities of the local alumnae clubs; 14% attend alumnae weekends/events; and 6.5% assist in advising or interviewing prospective students.

Responses To Education At Women's College

The graduates have high opinions of the environments provided by the women's colleges they attended.

- o Nearly all (91.5%) feel that it is very true or somewhat true that the climate fosters self-confidence.

- o The vast majority believe there are a substantial number of women faculty members/administrators serving as role models for students (81.5%) and that successful women from many walks of life from outside the institution are visible as speakers, trustees, etc. (83.6%).

- o Nearly two-thirds (64.6%) feel their colleges encouraged them to pursue non-traditional fields of study, while less than one-fifth (19.2%) feel there is an over-emphasis on traditionally-female fields.

- o Three-quarters (78.3%) believe the course material at their colleges incorporates women's perspective and recognition of women's accomplishments.

- o While about half (54.1%) believe they had limited opportunities to interact with men on an intellectual and social basis, only one-fifth identified their environments as over-protective (21.2%) or as environments that ill-equip students to compete with men in the world outside college (21.9%).

- o Four-fifths of the graduates (81.3%) feel the women's college environment promotes long-lasting friendships and associations among women.

- o If they had it to do again, the vast majority (91.2%) would be likely to choose the same college. Four-fifths (79.7%) would be likely to choose a women's college again.

- o The majority (56.6%) would -- if they had daughters-- encourage them to consider a women's college. Written comments indicate additional respondents would recommend a women's college if it had the appropriate academic program for their daughters.

Attitudes Towards Women's Issues

The respondents report concern with issues of discrimination, equality, and the role of women in our society.

- **Feminism:**

  When asked to describe their own feelings regarding concern with the position of women, the respondents indicate a shift towards feminism. While 61.6% identify themselves as strongly or mildly feminist before finishing their studies, this figure rose to 80.1% after graduation.

  Likewise, the number with strongly or mildly anti-feminist attitudes decreased from 6% before to 3.7% after. And the number feeling neutral decreased from 29.6% before to 14.9% after.

- **Job Opportunities:**

  Asked about their position regarding work opportunities for women, nearly all respondents (97.5%) strongly agree that a woman should have exactly the same job opportunities as a man. Yet, according to four-fifths (82.7%), women in the work force are discriminated against in areas such as hiring, firing, and promotion.

- **Women In Politics:**

  Similarly, while almost all respondents (92.1%) think it would be for the good of the country if more women became active in politics and political life, four-fifths (82.2%) believe women are still discriminated against in attaining public office.

- **Family Responsibility:**

  Nearly all (98.7%) feel that when a wife is employed, the husband should share in household tasks, and three-fifths (60.2%) feel that a married woman, as well as her husband, has a duty to earn a living for the family.

- **Day Care:**

  Four-fifths of the respondents (82.7%) believe there ought to be more day care institutions so both parents can participate in both paid work and public activities.

- **Work and Children:**

  Three-quarters of the women (75.1%) believe employed mothers can establish just as warm and secure a relationship with their children as mothers who are not employed.

Colleges' Contribution To Personality Traits

The graduates were given a list of personality traits representative of the highest stage of ego development and were asked to indicate to what extent, if any, their college experience contributed to the development of each characteristic. (See Table 6.)

- The results suggest that the characteristics most developed by the college experience are:
  - an appreciation of the students' own talents and abilities;
  - a desire for life-long learning; and
  - an appreciation of different perspectives on issues.
- A larger percentage of minority women credit their college experience with contributing to the development of the listed traits (average increase across all items: 9.9%).

Table 6: Percentage Believing Their College Experience Contributed Greatly or Moderately to the Development of Personality Traits

Trait	*Percentage*
Appreciation of own talents & abilities	87.3%
Desire for life-long learning	85.8%
Appreciation of different perspectives on issues	85.0%
Recognition of personal growth in self & others	77.8%
Commitment to risk-taking & personal growth	76.0%
Ability to communicate feelings & thoughts effectively	75.4%
Awareness of the challenges of being a woman in this society	74.9%
Sense of ability to make own decisions	74.5%
Realization of the complex causes of behavior	73.2%
Appreciation of own & others' individuality	72.8%
Awareness of how people differ from stereotypes	70.5%
Realistic goal-setting for future accomplishments	69.0
Awareness & acceptance of own weaker areas	67.2%
Reliance on own internal moral values & ethics	64.9%
Commitment to balancing time for self & others	62.3%
Recognition of own inner life, including conflicts	61.2%
Ability to empathize with others	56.3%
Ability to form close friendships	44.6%
Awareness of self as a spiritual person	40.1%
Ability to have deeper family relationships	34.1%

Significance of Degree

The concluding item asked the graduates for written comments on the significance of completing their degrees and any changes this has brought about in their lives.

- A random sampling of a quarter of the questionnaires indicates that the most frequently-reported effects are:
  - increased self-confidence;
  - a sense of personal fulfillment and satisfaction (especially in reaching goals);
  - enhanced self-awareness;
  - a sense of independence (both personal and financial);
  - broadened perspectives;
  - new career opportunities; and
  - a strong desire to further education.
- A common response was that having achieved this goal of the college degree, the graduate could now do anything to which she put her considerable, newly awakened talents and skills!

PROFILE OF AN OLDER GRADUATE OF A WOMEN'S COLLEGE

The typical non-traditional-age alumna of a women's college is a first generation college graduate, who is married with two children, and lives with her spouse.

AT ENROLLMENT

- She was in her thirties.
- Her children were aged 10 and 12. They were in school or stayed with her spouse while their mother attended class.
- She did not work full-time and earned less than $20,000 per year (prorated to full-time salary).
- She had about 20 previously earned college credits, all of which transferred to her second school.
- The college she attended was selected for its special programming for non-traditional-age students and for its academic program and reputation.

AT SCHOOL

- Financial support for her studies came from personal income, spouse's income, and student loans.
- She was equally likely to major in one of the liberal arts as in a professional field.
- She was not likely to participate in extra-curricular activities.
- After enrolling, she completed her degree in four years without taking a semester off and with studying at least one summer.

AFTER GRADUATION

- Now she is employed full-time and earns between $20,000 and $39,999.
- She reports that her current job gives her greater opportunity for professional development, more responsibility, and greater satisfaction than did her job before graduating.
- Since graduation she has continued her education in some way.

- She believes that a women's college:
  - fosters self-confidence;
  - provides women role models;
  - encourages women in non-traditional fields of study; and
  - presents course material from a woman's perspective.
- She would choose the same college again if she had it to do over, and she would encourage her daughter to attend a women's college.
- She supports her alma mater financially.
- She labels herself as a feminist and has feminist attitudes toward many social issues. She believes in:
  - equal career opportunities for men and women;
  - shared household and financial responsibilities for men and women; and
  - the desirability and need for more quality day care.
- She believes that her college education contributed to:
  - the development of her own talents and abilities;
  - a desire for life-long learning; and
  - an appreciation for different perspectives on issues.

PROFILE OF AN OLDER MINORITY GRADUATE OF A WOMEN'S COLLEGE

Overall, older minority graduates are highly similar to the total sample, but there are a few interesting differences in their responses.

AT ENROLLMENT

- Minority women tended to be about two years older at enrollment, on the average, and to be more likely to be working full-time.
- Although the majority were married and living with a spouse, the percentage was much smaller than for the total sample and the percentage of separated and divorced was greater than the total sample.
- Minority women, too, had had some college, but generally had only three credits earned, and transferred.

AT SCHOOL

- Minority women were more likely than the total sample to stop-out, and a greater number mentioned finances as the reason.
- They relied more heavily on college grants and scholarships to finance their educations, and much less on spouse's income.

AFTER GRADUATION

- The outcomes for minority women are generally the same as for the total sample; however:
  - they are nearly twice as likely to say that graduating from college changed their educational aspirations for their children; and
  - a greater percentage indicate that their college experience contributed to:
    - the development of their own talents and abilities;
    - a desire for life-long learning; and
    - an appreciation for different perspectives on issues.

APPENDIX -- REPORT FIGURES

Figure 1:

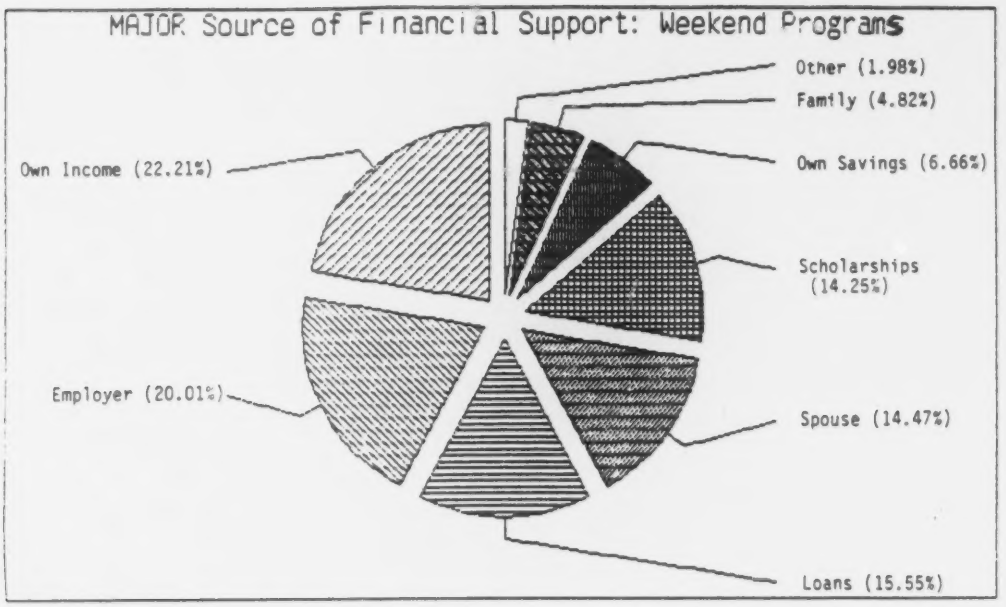
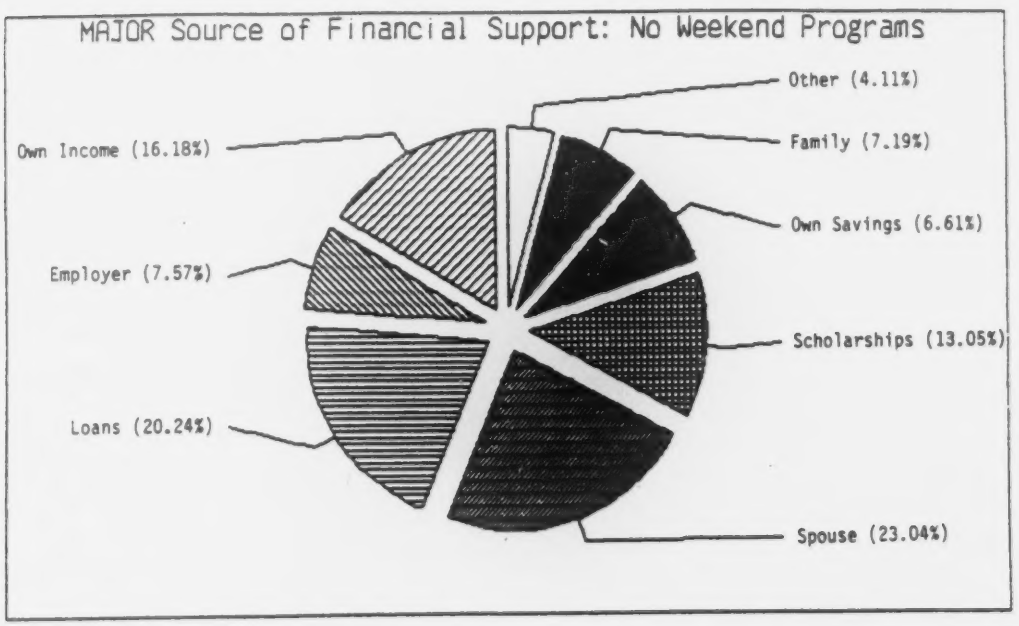


Figure 2:



PARTICIPATING COLLEGES

Agnes Scott College
Brenau College
Chatham College
College of New Rochelle
College of Notre Dame of Maryland
College of Saint Catherine
Converse College
Emmanuel College
Hartford College for Women
Hollins College
Hood College
Mary Baldwin College
Marymount College
Meredith College
Mount Holyoke College
Mount Saint Mary's College
Mundelein College
Notre Dame College of Ohio
Randolph-Macon Woman's College
Rosemont College
Russell Sage College
Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College
Salem College
Seton Hill College
Simmons College
Smith College
Spelman College
Texas Woman's University
Trinity College (DC)
Trinity College of Vermont
Ursuline College
Wellesley College
Wesleyan College
Wilson College

WOMEN'S COLLEGE COALITION

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AVAILABLE PUBLICATIONS

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A Study Of The Learning Environment At Women's Colleges, Highlights Of The Study, 1981, 32 pps. ($5.00 members; $7.50 non-members)

Profile II: A Second Profile Of Women's Colleges: Analysis Of The Data, 1981, 16 pps. ($4.00 members; $6.50 non-members)

"Enrollment Trends In Women's Colleges" reprinted from Trends and Patterns: A Study of Enrollments in Higher Education 1970-79, a National Center for Education Statistics publication, 1981, 21 pps. ($3.75 members; $6.00 non-members)

A Profile Of Women's College Presidents: Summary Report, 1982, 20 pps. ($4.50 members; $6.75 non-members)

The Case For Women's Colleges: A Review Of The Literature, 1983, 12 pps. ($3.00 members; $6.50 non-members)

'67/'77: A Profile Of Recent Women's College Graduates, 1985, 24 pps. ($5.00 members; $7.50 non-members)

Women's College Coalition Membership List, 1989, 5 pps. (free to members; $3.50 non-members)

List Of Women's Colleges, (includes date founded, affiliation, level, and degrees offered), 1989, 11 pps. ($3.00 members; $7.00 non-members)

Alumnae Giving At Women's Colleges: A Ten-Year Report, 1988, 23 pps. ($7.00 members; $9.50 non-members)

Women's Colleges Today, 1988, 12-minute videotape ($13.00 VHS, $42.50 3/4" members; $20.00 VHS, $49.50 3/4" non-members)

The Women's College Directory, 1988, 126 pps. ($21.00 members; $23.50 non-members)

***** Prices include postage and handling charges. *****

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